

In addition to this hectic pace, many of us grew up with visions of the “perfect” holidays as seen on television or movies. Remember the old “Ideals” magazines our teachers had when we were in elementary school? How picture-perfect the festive homes looked in those glossy, full-color photographs! And how wonderful the holidays always look on Currier & Ives or Norman Rockwell greeting cards!

Have ANY of you ever HAD one of those “perfect” holidays? What if absolutely everything in the house looked just right? Homemade cookies beautifully prepared ahead of time... some arranged on holiday trays and others creatively wrapped as gifts. Piles of gifts wrapped (ahead of time!) with special ornamental decorations and hand-made wrapping paper that might have been dyed and stamped with cute little designs cut out of potato halves. Neat, attractive piles of perfect little gifts for everyone for all eight nights of Hanukkah. The Kwanzaa table loaded with mouth-watering food from the harvest, and a house full of relatives and neighbors who have gathered at your home to start the festival on the day right after huge Christmas feasts of their own. And household decorations inside and out looking like you have hired an interior decorator to put them in place.

NOT!

Even if we could approach this level of perfection, at what price? How many times would we have screamed at the kids not to touch the cookie batter? Or gasped with alarm as our eager toddler grabbed the scissors to help “wrap” a present? Did we lose our temper when our spouse forgot to pick up the all-important crème of tartar for the meringue Angel Puffs or the brown sugar for the sweet potato pies? And why can’t your sister-in-law stop harping about your son’s long hair or Aunt Minnie stop lamenting about her aching bunions... at the dinner table, while Uncle Roy drinks way too many eggnogs? Why can’t *you* occasionally have the kids on Christmas Day, instead of on Christmas Eve while you’re still running around like crazy buying and wrapping last-minute gifts? *Your* parents would like to have their grandkids with them on Christmas morning, but the divorce decree gives your spouse visitation rights “on holidays”.

Needless to say, Currier & Ives never lived in the 21st Century, facing a potential down-sizing of their company... and possible loss of their jobs, while trying to buy enough gifts so as not to disappoint the kids. They weren’t a single parent trying to compensate for the non-paying, absent parent by doubling up on gift buying when not being able to afford it. They didn’t have “blended” families with siblings from two families vying for Mom & Dad’s attention.

Collateral Damage

Besides your own worrying about this hectic holiday hubbub, who else can suffer from this stress? The children. It is only natural for parents to sometimes blow a

gasket with this much stress, and who's the closest target? The kids. But stressful outbursts can have very damaging and potentially permanent results. Screaming at the kids, or hitting or shaking them because you need them to stop crying, or leave you alone, or stop dropping crumbs on your freshly vacuumed carpet, or stop whining in the department store, can cause serious physical and psychological damage.

Planning is the Key to Getting Ready for the Holidays.

Being a parent can be stressful enough on ordinary days. Holidays, with the rush and demand on time that accompany them, can be an even bigger challenge for parents. But with a little preplanning, they can actually be what they were intended to be – a time of enjoyment and relaxation spent with family and friends.

Manageable Components & Lists

First, we can break the season into manageable components and plan them with lists of tasks. Tackle portions at a time, cross off items on your lists, and you will feel like you have made progress!

Have a **plan** that includes everyone, especially for activities *at home* such as preparing food, creating hand-made gifts, wrapping gifts, decorating inside and out, and sending & receiving cards.

Then, you have many tasks *away from home*, such as **shopping** for food, gifts, decorations and new outfits; helping relatives; and planning, rehearsing for and participating in pageants or programs.

Holiday **visiting** includes visitors coming to your home, and you and the family traveling to others' homes, plus attending places of worship and community events.

Post holiday stress can include the financial drain, as well as the time-consuming process of returning/exchanging gifts, packing away the decorations, sending thank you notes, sadness that it's all over, and the approach of more dismal winter weather.

Whew!

For this series, we have focused on these four key components: 1) Plan Ahead, 2) Shopping, 3) Visiting, and 4) Post-Holiday Stress.

Part I. Plan Ahead

While most parents have limited time, you can make the most of the time you do have by planning ahead. For traveling, a little pre-packing can really save time and energy. Don't forget to get all family members involved in the planning. Even small children can perform simple tasks.

Start with some lists. *One* list should include all the *things* you have *to do* to get everyone out of the house—from feeding pets, setting timers on the lights, to locking up. Think about the clothing you and your children will need and lay it out. If it needs repairs or cleaning, you will be able to spot problems now rather than when you're on your way out the door.

Your *second* list should include *items* you want *to bring* with you—a child's favorite toy, changes of clothes, any gifts or food you will be bringing, and any maps in case you're visiting a new place. Try to pre-pack as much of this as you can, putting items you want to take along near the door where they can be easily found.

Try to make preparations when your children are not underfoot—during naps or after they have gone to bed.

By preparing and following your lists, you will avoid last-minute surprises like discovering a buttonless sweater, or leaving the house to find that you have left an item behind. You can never foresee all your problems, but by starting early you will have time for any unforeseen problems and feel less stressed.

Dress for the occasion

Holidays usually mean fancier clothes and new outfits and shoes. But no matter how your children are dressed, comfort should be your guideline. Uncomfortable clothing means cranky children, and cranky children can lead to cranky parents. So as pretty as some of those ruffles are, keep in mind how scratchy they're going to feel to an active little one, and perhaps choose a dress that is simpler.

Create a visiting "survival kit" -- Some things to include are bibs or old shirts to put over dress clothes, extra play clothes, an extra jacket or sweater, a sipper cup (to eliminate spills), medicine, Band-Aids, a comb or brush, pajamas, and one or two favorite toys. Be sure to pre-pack a spare change of clothes, so that once the holiday photos are taken and the pageant or dinner is over, the kids can play in more casual clothes. Let the kids add to the survival kit. If you will be traveling a distance, you might want to pack a pillow and blanket to help little ones to dreamland on the way home.

Leave these items in one bag, cleaning or replacing items as needed, and you can grab the kit *any* time you go on an outing, saving even more time.

Enlist the troops

Whenever possible, include your children in preparations. Even very small children can help gather items together to be packed, or help with baking or setting the table.

If you must keep children out of the way while you're busy preparing for visitors, but don't want to leave them out of the fun, have them make decorations to suit the occasion. Spread out newspapers or an old bed sheet for easy clean-up later, then get out the paper, scissors, crayons and glue and let the kids create all kinds of holiday décor!

Take advantage of this time together to share traditions. Explain to your children the meaning or history of the day or share funny stories about past holidays. Tell them how you made walnut shell turkeys or hunted for pinecones to string onto ribbon. Your children will enjoy themselves while learning.

Laugh together

And if their popcorn strings keep falling apart, instead of yelling about the mess, just laugh and sit down and eat some with them. If the gifts they wrap are peeking out of torn corners, help them plaster the holes with stickers. If they put the stamps on crooked for your holiday cards, who cares? Make jokes out of mistakes and learn to enjoy the "process" of the holiday instead of insisting on a perfect outcome.

A little sleep can go a long way

Be firm about bedtime. Most children get excited at the prospect of holidays and other special occasions and may not want to go to sleep. Try to be firm about this. Turn bedtime into a special part of the holiday tradition by reading holiday stories to them at bedtime... ones that you save for only this time of year.

Children who don't get enough sleep won't be any fun. Try to get enough sleep yourself, too. The only thing worse than a tired child is a tired parent.

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Part II. **Shopping**

Before you go -- Plan Ahead...

How is everyone feeling? Is your child too tired or hungry to shop? Are you? It's best to go when both of you are rested. Don't wait until the end of a tiring day. If possible, postpone your trip or arrange for a sitter.

Have a talk – Before you go shopping, let your child know that it is a privilege to go shopping with you. And that you can go shopping and have fun, as long as you both understand your family's shopping rules. Keep rules positive – focus on behavior you want to see. Before entering the store say, "Stay close to me." "Use your quiet voice." Or "when we leave, you can select a package of gum if you remember the rules."

Make a Behavior Chart – Have your child help make it and decide on rewards. Remind your child of the chart before you go shopping.

Follow Through – If one of your rules is that you will have to leave your child home the next time you go shopping if he/she misbehaves while shopping...make sure you follow through and DO it.

Role Play – to find out if your child understands your expectations, role play at home how to act in the store. Let your child pretend to be the parent and you pretend to be the child. Have fun. Laugh. See what your child's suggestions would be if you misbehave.

Bring-Alongs – with a little pre-planning in the form of bring-alongs from home, you can shop while your child keeps busy and feels secure.

- For a small child, a familiar blanket or a soft toy tied to the handle of the shopping cart.
- A nutritious snack (crackers, raisins, grapes, toasted O's cereal)
- A story or picture book
- Small action or manipulative toys
- A pad and pencil or markers

Bring-Alongs of a Different Kind – take an older child (possibly a neighbor's child) with you to help entertain your child. Go shopping with a friend. Somehow children are better behaved (usually) when parents are happier. You may also feel more relaxed and creative.

Reward good behavior – agree on what will happen if your child behaves at the store. Keep it simple: a favorite snack, small toy or book; promise to read a book or play a game at home; a stop by the park on your way home. Keep it simple and be sure to follow up.

One Last thing Before You Go

Wear comfortable shoes and clothes (you and your child). During winter months, you may want to remove outerwear once in the store so that no one overheats.

Now You Are Ready to Shop!

At the Mall...

Keep an eye on them -- Select a secret word or signal you can both use to get the attention of the other, such as some sign language that means, "Stop." "Come here." "Be careful."

Keep your child within sight in the store. That means being able to see them over the tops of the aisles. In stores with corridors of tall aisles, hold hands. Put them in the basket or let them hold on to the cart with you. Some stores even have little play cars attached to the front of the shopping carts, which makes the "ride" lots of fun for your child while you're still in control of the cart.

In the past, you and your older children could agree to meet at some designated place at a certain time. However, in this fearful era of snipers, kidnappers, child molesters and terrorism, it may no longer be wise to let even the older children

wander off to shop on their own. Even if they are older and mature enough, have them go in pairs and still set a designated place and time to meet.

Make a game of shopping – Try one of these ideas the next time you go shopping.

- Guess how much items will cost
- “Who can see the shoe store first?”
- Count all the hats you see on people’s heads
- Find all the Bs on store signs
- Who can find the potatoes first? Or mistletoe if it’s Christmas, or picture of a turkey if it’s Thanksgiving?
- What animal does ham come from?
- Find 5 red things
- How many different foods can you make from tomato paste?
- Have older children help you comparison shop. Which is the cheapest? Which gives you more for your money?

Check-Out Lane Games

- Who is wearing green?
- Which sign begins with a T?
- Tell a favorite story and have your child tell the parts he/she knows.
- Sing songs quietly to each other
- Make up silly songs like “Sing A Song of Spinach”
- Do quiet cheers, spelling your child’s name “give me an A” (A), etc.
- Describe a food in the cart and have your child try to guess the food name.
- Play simple catch with an apple while your child sits in the basket
- Play – “I see something.” Ask the child to guess what it is.
- Play “My grandfather owns a grocery store and in it he sells something green.” Ask the child to guess what food it is. Whoever guesses correctly takes the next turn.

Give Your Child Some Choices – when possible, allow your child to make a choice or decision, “Blue or red socks?” “Which do you think would look best on our tree, silver ornaments or gold ornaments?” “Which sweater would Grandma like?”

Give your Child a Responsibility

- “Can you please help me pick out the prettiest tablecloth for our holiday dinner?” [P.S. Be prepared to bargain or compromise.]
- Let your child help steer the cart.
- Make your child a copy of your shopping list and have him check off the items as you find them. This helps the child see a tangible “end” to this shopping trip as you progress through the list.

Praise. Praise. Praise!

- Reinforce good behavior. “You are so helpful” “You are making good choices today!”
- Talk and play with your child. Encourage your child to talk, watch, listen, and think.
- Praise another child’s behavior. Learning from another child’s example can be very effective. Don’t belittle your child in comparison, however.
- A HUG can be reassuring and say more than words sometimes.

Some malls may have lockers like those you’d find at a train or bus depot, into which you can periodically stash your purchases to lighten your load. If not available, try a quick trip out to the car to unload your purchases, and then go back into the stores. This also gives you and your children a fresh air break.

YOU HAVE TRIED EVERYTHING...AND YET

Remember: Kids will be kids – they are not perfect! And no matter how good they usually are, no matter how much pre-planning you have done as a parent, there may come a time when you both have to deal with a stressful shopping situation. Here’s help.

- Ignore inappropriate behavior unless it becomes dangerous, destructive, embarrassing to you, or annoying to others.
- Remove a child who is out of control – take him to the restroom or out of the store. Tell him quietly, eyeball to eyeball, that his behavior is totally unacceptable.
- Wait – for the child to calm down. Say nothing else. Then ask if she is ready to try again.
- Go home – if she cannot calm down. Find a sitter and return alone.
- Ensure your child that next time you will bring them, and they will have a chance to show you their good behavior.

Don’t Ever Buy the Child a Treat from the store where a fit was thrown.

What to do when you see other parents abuse their children in public?

The NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect believes “A person who cares CAN prevent child abuse.” It is up to all of us to protect our young. Here are some simple, supportive things to say or do the next time you see a situation that is out of control.

- “She seems to be trying your patience.”
- “It looks like it has been a long day for both of you.”
- “My child used to get upset like that.”
- Strike up a conversation with the parent to divert attention away from the child.

- Divert the misbehaving child's attention by talking to the child.
- Praise the child and parent at the first opportunity.
- If the child is in danger, offer assistance. For example, if a child is left unattended in a grocery cart, stand by the child until the parent returns.

If you know the parent, offer to watch the child so the parent can take a break.

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Part III. Visiting

Holidays with babies or very young ones

How exciting! Your first winter holiday season with a new member of the family! You're eager to show off your new baby or newly adopted child. Whatever the circumstance, you feel like you will have to make this a very special holiday. For first-time parents, you may have to forego some past practices in order to accommodate your new baby. Depending on baby's age, the weather conditions, and everyone's overall health, you will have to gauge how careful to be.

Keep it simple for baby. Baby is too young to know or care about gifts, Christmas trees, Santa Claus, or Menorahs, much less about meeting five aunts, three uncles, a brood of cousins, plus neighbors who only drop by during holidays. *They* will be *eager* to coo over baby and want to hold or play with baby. You must be kind but firm and restrict the touching, kissing and holding. Your baby's health and welfare comes first. When baby is older, the cousins can take turns holding him. Use your judgement.

If your baby is old enough to hold her head up and does not seem alarmed or uncomfortable around the new "strangers," you can increase the interaction with certain people. If baby seems frightened, stay back a bit from the relatives and

comfort her in a quiet place. Let baby gradually get used to having more than just mommy and daddy in his/her immediate universe.

Use standard calming practices if the holiday bustle becomes too much for baby. Go to a quiet or empty room. Hold baby close to you and slowly walk around the room or rock in place. Take baby for a walk outside. Lower noise and lights in the room. This may help reduce your child's stress over this new holiday experience.

No Rough Play

Playing rough is never appropriate for babies or youngsters under two, because, like "shaking", this can cause lasting damage. When you or others play with young children, never bounce them or play rough with them. Never toss them in the air or swing them around by their arms or legs. Like shaking, these can cause lasting damage. So don't let Uncle Joe toss your little one around like he might do with older kids.

Remember... young children have weak neck muscles, heavy heads, growing brains, and thin skulls. Shaking, bouncing or tossing them around can cause blindness, loss of hearing, internal bleeding, paralysis, lasting brain damage, or death. Children UNDER age 2 are most at risk.

Making Special Allowances for the Adopted Child

A newly adopted child will likely have stress, too. They may expect the very best Christmas ever, because they have never experienced a good one. Or they may have become so cynical and untrusting, that they will *expect* their holiday to crash to pieces at every turn. It's up to you, the adults, to keep these holiday worries to a minimum for all of you.

It might be wise for you to facilitate or referee first meetings with relatives from afar who may be meeting your new child for the first time. While your birth children may be used to Aunt Selma's squooshy bearhugs, your adopted child may not trust such close contact with a "stranger." So you will need to gently temper Aunt Selma's enthusiasm and let your child warm up to his newfound relatives gradually.

Making Special Arrangements for Children (and Adults) with Disabilities...

Holidays are often a difficult time for people with disabilities, especially young children who have not yet learned or become proficient at coping skills. Large gatherings, the rapid pace of activities, lots of noise, music and visual distractions, and extra holiday trappings can all be distracting or hindrances to people in wheelchairs, using crutches, or with hearing or vision impairment. Thinking ahead to make some special accommodations for them is not only helpful for them, but

also makes your other guests more aware and comfortable during holiday gatherings. Consider some of the following tips.

Include your child in the planning. Everyone likes to feel important, so if your child is old enough, let him/her help you make the guest list, plan the menu, bake some holiday foods, decorate the house, go gift shopping, etc. This will bolster his/her self-esteem as well as create a wonderful family tradition.

Watch out for room arrangements. Is there room for a wheelchair around the dinner table or in the room where guests will be visiting? Make table arrangements with special needs in mind. Round tables are easier for those with hearing disabilities to see others' faces. Check with local or state agencies to see if there are table or menu items in Braille, or make your place cards with extra large typeface that is easy to read. Your elderly guests will appreciate this, too. Make sure the person using a wheelchair can easily move to and from the table without causing a traffic hazard for others or for those bringing the food to the table.

Keep the music down. Your child or a guest with a hearing impairment will have difficulty hearing with music in the background. Many people have mild (and sometimes undetected) hearing loss that doesn't affect them until music or multiple conversations flood the room with cacophonous noise. If your child or guest uses an FM listening device, discreetly place a microphone in the centerpiece arrangement, as it can help them pick up more table conversation.

Is the room well-lit so that those with limited sight can see a bit better? On the other hand, lots of blinking lights can trigger seizures, in case your child or guests have any conditions that could lapse into a seizure. Too big a crowd or too much physical activity or running around can be a problem for those with ADHD or certain phobias or mental disorders. Perhaps a gathering that is somewhat calm and sedate would be better for such children or guests.

Is the entrance to your home accessible for those using a walker, cane or wheelchair? Are bathroom towels and toiletries within easy reach for those who must feel their way or those in a wheelchair? Ideally, all bathrooms should have grab bars near the toilet for anyone needing that stability, but most homes do not come equipped this way. If yours does not, perhaps someone can be assigned to quietly aide anyone needing assistance to avoid any embarrassing fuss.

Does one of your guests have a problem with alcohol or drugs? If so, perhaps your menu can include only non-alcoholic beverages so that there is no temptation, nor need to "abstain" in front of others, as all will be drinking the same non-alcoholic drinks. People taking certain prescription medicines cannot consume alcoholic

drinks, so creative, decorative non-alcoholic punches and holiday drinks would help avoid dangerous medication interactions or levels.

Simply, just think ahead. Put yourself in others' situations -- consider the total sensory and physical arrangement/environment, plus accessibility -- for your holiday activity. Your event will be more enjoyable and less stressful for everyone!

Be Aware of Everyone's Feelings

Don't expect everyone to behave exactly the way you have dreamed it in your head. Remember, with today's non-traditional families and far-flung relatives, bringing everyone together for a big holiday visit is often more like the Holly Hunter movie "Home for the Holidays" than the happy final meal in the Dickens' classic, "A Christmas Carol." Be prepared for discord and be ready to use some diversionary tactics or methods for calming down. Be alert not to let younger children wander off alone.

For children who break the rules

- Have the child say what the problem is. ("I want to play ball in the house and Mom says I can't")
- Have the child come up with as many solutions as possible. At this point, the number of ideas is more important than how good the ideas are. ("I could play ball outside. If I just roll the ball on the floor, it won't knock over the Christmas tree. Maybe I could do a puzzle instead. I could share the ball quietly with cousin Maya.")
- Discuss solutions together and have the child choose which solution to try next time. Be sure it is a solution you can both accept. ("I will play ball outside.")
- Try out the solution.
- Check the results. If it works, great. If not, start again.

Several important messages come across to children when you use this approach. First, no problem is so great that you cannot solve it. Second, you are responsible for your own behavior. Third, it is not the child, but their behavior, which brings disapproval.

When adults lose their temper

- Find a way to help yourself calm down so that you do not do or say something you will be sorry for later.
- If your children are old enough to be left alone or if there is another adult with your children, go somewhere else until you calm down.
- Tell your children what you are doing.

- Take a walk. Or take Uncle Roy out for a walk.
- Go to another room.
- Lock yourself in the bathroom. Try to stay away no longer than five or ten minutes.
- When you come back to your children, calmly explain your feelings.
- Listen to music.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Count backward from 10.
- Try to do something with your hands to keep them busy. Cook something. Wash a counter. Draw. Write what you are feeling.
- Just scribble.
- To help yourself not say anything you will be sorry for later, chew gum.
- Sing.
- Put your hands up to your mouth or in your pockets.

REMEMBER: What adults do always teaches children what to do. If you lash out, your children will learn to do the same. If you do lash out, apologize to your child. “I’m sorry” teach them what to do if they offend others. And if adults are unable to mask their feelings or past grudges, make it clear to them that it is inappropriate to air them or to negatively act upon them in front of the children.

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Part IV **Post-Holiday Stress**

Often There Is Financial Stress

Let's face it. Most of us overspend during the holidays, and then spend much of the ensuing year trying to catch up with our budgets. For some, this can get drastically out of control and create stress, affecting family members in the process. More seriously, when a parent loses a job, how do you buy holiday goodies for your family? If there has been a divorce, how do you create new holiday traditions and make up for the missing parent? Do you try, as a single parent, to provide an extravagant Christmas because you could not afford to buy the kids new clothes throughout the year? There can be many financial complications to holidays. But there are ways to enjoy the holidays and quality family time inexpensively.

Turn the getting into giving

So money's tight and you won't be splurging much this year. Why not celebrate the real spirit of the holidays by taking your children down to a local soup kitchen to serve a holiday meal? Or help your kids collect items for holiday food and gift boxes, prepare them together, and then deliver them to families that are needier than yours. It can help to remove your own pain by replacing it with the true spirit

of giving. It also teaches the lessons of giving to your children and helps all of you appreciate all that you *do* have... each other.

Take advantage of free events

Besides having a sensible spending plan for gift giving, there are other ways to enjoy the holidays inexpensively.

Many communities and organizations sponsor special events surrounding holidays. Free concerts, special tours of local historic sites or displays, street fairs and festivals, visits from Santa, or church concerts are all activities you and your family can enjoy for little or no cost.

Your local newspaper can provide you with announcements about upcoming events. Note them, and plan to attend as a family. Attending an event can become a holiday tradition itself. Many of us grew up remembering simple trips into the city to see the department store displays. Those memories can be passed along to the next generation, for as little as the cost of transportation and a light snack together afterward.

Just be careful not to turn the trip into a hectic shopping spree... although having *some* of your holiday money with you might come in handy for one or two last minute items that would save you an additional trip to the store. The key is to think ahead.

Give of yourself

Time being the sparse commodity that it is, you may still be able to make some gifts to keep your budget in line. Make a simple book cover out of wallpaper or cloth remnants. Bake several extra pies to give as gifts. Offer a “gift certificate” of your time... to shovel snow, or fix a door hinge, or baby-sit your sister-in-law’s children.

Post-Holiday Blues

Inevitably, there is a letdown after the holidays. Taking down the decorations is never quite as much fun as putting them up. Someone is bound to be disappointed with a gift, or the quantity of gifts. Siblings may be new to the concept of “sharing” all the new toys. And there’s an entire year to wait for more holiday goodies. So now is the time for more teamwork.

Enlist the troops again... to help with packing up the decorations. Ask their opinions and ask for ideas to use for next year. Maybe they’d like to start a new tradition or toss out one that’s lost its luster. They may have outgrown the visit to SantaLand and might want to do something more mature next year. In this way,

you begin to lay the groundwork of positive expectations for next year's holiday season and made them feel a part of the team.

If your children seem overwhelmed with too many new toys, or you have run out of room for them, now might be a good time to suggest that they donate some of their old toys [the ones in good shape]. During dreary winter months, you can create fix-up projects for them to repair, repaint and refresh old toys to give away. By Valentine's Day, you can create a new family tradition of going to a shelter or a charity with your children to donate these "previously loved toys" to a whole new set of children.

Teaching discipline is always in style.

Whether it's fighting over toys or going stir crazy indoors during the post-holiday months, it's never too late to teach discipline. Teaching discipline is not just a one-time thing, or something you do in front of company. It may be harder at first if you start when children are older, but you can do it. And you have many years to do it.

Remember: discipline is how adults teach children to grow to be happy, safe, well-adjusted members of society. Raising children is a tough job, but as children learn to control their own behavior, discipline gets easier and easier. As they learn self-control and to give instead of always expecting to receive, they will become more satisfied with themselves.

It's well worth the initial effort as your children become responsible for their actions. And you can feel proud that your loving care guided them on their way.

Take time for yourself

While holidays usually focus on family and friends, don't forget to take some time out for your own "holiday." Relax and remember that everything doesn't have to be perfect to be fun. If you feel pressure mounting, don't be afraid to ask for help. Phone a relative, a friend or **Call 1-800-THE KIDS**. A friendly voice can make a difference.

Most of the tips above were taken from materials created as a public Service by the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Youth and Family Services, Division of Disability Services, and New Jersey's Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. Tips for the deaf and hard of hearing came from Paula Rosenthal, J.D., publisher of www.HearingExchange.com. To order copies of the brochures, call 609-292-6448 or 292-8469: "*Hassle-free holidays*", "*Keeping your cool when your young child cries*", and "*A Parent's Guide to Dealing with Stress*." The shopping and discipline tips are from "*Sing a Song of Spinach*," "*Would You Like to Wear the Red or Blue Socks?*" and "*Helping Your Kids Behave While Shopping*" which is adapted from: SCAN/PAA of Virginia, compliments of The Parenting Education Resource Center, Prevent Child Abuse – New Jersey.

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NOTE:

Due to budgetary restraints, our clipping service has been reduced. We would appreciate it if the weekly publications could please send tear sheets of this article to our press office for our files.

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